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## SERMON DXXXVIII.

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON FOR 1851.

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## CONFESSIONS OF DYING MEN.

"It is appointed unto men once to die."—HEBREWS 9: 27.

THE fact asserted in this text is admitted by all; but how few appear to feel its practical influence. Who would infer from the conduct and conversation of most men, that they believed themselves to be mortal, or that they expected anything less than that their residence on earth is to be perpetual? They live as carelessly, plan as confidently, and pursue the world with as much eagerness, as if they were exempted from change, and could set at defiance the attacks of disease and death. Yet they must die—must die soon, and may die suddenly; and after death cometh the judgment. This is the appointment of God, and in this war there is no discharge. It is wise, then, to consider our latter end, to be familiar with the thought of dying, often and seriously to consider what will be our feelings and views when we shall come to lie upon our death-bed, and feel that we are going into eternity. This is a duty which especially demands our attention now, as we have just taken leave of the old year, and are entering upon the unknown, untried scenes of a new one, which, to some of us, no doubt, will be the last year of life.

Let us, then, endeavor to bring the closing scene near, to think of ourselves as having reached the end of our earthly course, and about to take our final leave of the world and all its busy cares. The question arises, what, in such a case, would be our feelings, what the reflections that would press upon our minds with the greatest weight and solemnity? We

may, indeed, die so suddenly, that we shall have no time to think till we think in eternity. We may drop in a moment into the unseen world, as many do, without any warning of our end, till the blow is struck, and the spirit finds itself in the immediate presence of God. Or the last sickness may come in such a form as to rack the body with agonizing pain, put out the light of reason, and cloud the mind in wild delirium. But on supposition that we shall be notified of our approaching end by the usual precursors of death, and that the dying scene shall find us in the exercise of our reason, capable of reflecting upon the past, and anticipating the future, let us inquire how we shall feel, what will be our judgment as to our present course of life, and what our thoughts, as we draw near the invisible world, and know that we are standing on the verge of a boundless eternity. We cannot, indeed, know all that we shall feel and think in that solemn hour. It will be to each of us a new and untried scene, till we are actually called to pass through it, and learn from dying what it is to die. But it is certain we shall feel and think very differently from what we now do. On many subjects our views will be wholly changed; they will appear to us in an entirely new light, and awaken feelings within, of which we can now form but a very faint conception. We know this from the nature of the case, and also from the feelings and views which are wont to be expressed by men when they come to die. We have seen many persons die, and we have authentic accounts of the manner in which many others died whom we did not see. Let us, then, study the experience of the dying. It is the last school of wisdom to which the children of men can be advanced; and as we shall all ere long be placed in that school, let us recall a few particulars respecting which the feelings and sentiments of men are wont to undergo a great change as they view themselves near to the close of life. As I shall illustrate the subject by a frequent recurrence to what persons have felt and said in that situation, I may entitle my discourse—**CONFESSIONS OF DYING MEN.**

1. In the first place, when men come to die, they are wont to feel, with a vividness of impression wholly unknown before, the shortness of life, and the unspeakable value of time. Viewed in prospect, or in the season of health and happiness, life usually seems long, and time is but little valued. To the young, a year is wont to appear longer than a whole life does to him who is about to depart out of it; and time hangs so heavily on their hands that they know not what to do with it. And even when they have attained to the meridian of their days, and their sun is on the decline, they usually have but a very faint impression of the shortness of life, or of the immense value of the hours that are flitting by them. Especially is this

the case with the irreligious and worldly-minded. Immersed in the cares and pursuits of earth and sense, they perceive not how rapidly the little span of life is wasting away, nor how soon all the time allotted them in this state of probation will have passed with the years beyond the flood. They still live under the delusive impression that they have time enough before them to accomplish all their plans, and do what they please.

But when they come to die, the whole scene is changed. Life is then seen to be indeed but a vapor, that appeareth for a little moment, and then vanisheth away. All the months and years they have passed on earth are then compressed, as it were, into a point, and seem more like a dream than a reality. Hear how the worthies, whose names are recorded in the Bible, spoke on this subject, as they approached the close of life. "My days," says Job, "are swifter than a post, they are passed away as a shadow." "Remember how short my time is," cries the Psalmist. "Behold thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; as for man, his days are as grass; in the morning it is green; in the evening it is cut down and withered." And the patriarch Jacob, though he had lived an hundred and thirty years, felt constrained to say, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."

Such are the feelings of all men at the close of life. It seems but a transient moment, and the events of it as a dream when one awaketh. Lord Chesterfield, though a skeptic, and devoted to a life of pleasure, was compelled to say, near the close of his days, "When I reflect upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, myself, I can hardly persuade myself that all the frivolous hurry and bustle and pleasure of the world are a reality; but they seem to have been the dreams of restless nights." Voltaire, after having spent a long life in blaspheming the Saviour, and opposing his Gospel, said to his physician on his dying bed, "I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me six months of life." "O, time! time!" exclaimed the dying Altamont, "how art thou fled forever. A month! oh, for a single week! I ask not for years, though an age were too little for the much I have to do." Said Gibbon, "The present is a fleeting moment, the past is no more, and my prospect of futurity is dark and doubtful." Hobbes said, as the last hour approached, "If I had the whole world to dispose of, I would give it to live one day." "Oh!" cried the Duke of Buckingham, as he was closing a life devoted to folly and sin, "what a prodigal have I been of the most valuable of all possessions, time! I have squandered it away with the persuasion that it was lasting; and now, when a few days would be worth a hecatomb of worlds, I cannot flatter myself with the prospect of half a dozen hours."

You see from these examples what are the impressions of dying men, whether good or bad, respecting the brevity of life, and the worth of time. One sentiment is then felt by all,—life is very short, and time is of infinite value.

2. Another confession which is wont to be made by dying men is, that there is nothing in this world that can satisfy the wants of the immortal soul. This is a lesson which men in general are extremely slow to learn. Though they are continually taught by the Word and the Providence of God, that all things earthly are but for a moment, and perish in the using, they still pursue them as their supreme good, and vainly flatter themselves that when this plan is accomplished, and that object attained, they shall be satisfied; they shall be happy. This is the delusion of the young, the middle-aged, and the aged; and it is the mainspring of that restless activity and ambition, and aspiring after the world, which we witness around us. All wish to be happy, and all expect to be happy in the possession of worldly good.

But in the dying hour this is discovered to be a most fatal mistake, and men look back with amazement upon the folly and madness with which they pursued the world, and looked to its possessions for a satisfying portion. As they stand upon the verge of time, and extend their view to the boundless eternity that stretches before them, the world sinks into utter insignificance, and they wonder how they ever could have been so enamored of its glittering toys, and how the living can be so deluded as to chase its fleeting vanities in the expectation of deriving from them a satisfying good. When Salmasius, one of the greatest scholars of his time, drew near to death, he exclaimed bitterly against himself,—“Oh, I have lost a world of time; time, the most precious thing on the earth, whereof if I had but one year more, it should be spent in David’s Psalms and Paul’s Epistles. Oh, mind the world less and God more!” Grotius possessed the finest genius ever recorded of a youth in the learned world, and rose to an eminence in literature and science which drew upon him the admiration of all Europe; yet, after all his attainments and high reputation, he was constrained at last to cry out,—“Ah, I have consumed my life in a laborious doing of nothing! I would give all my learning and honor for the plain integrity of John Uriek,”—a poor man of eminent piety. Sir John Mason, on his deathbed, said,—“I have lived to see five princes, and have been privy counsellor to four of them; I have seen the most important things in foreign parts, and have been present at most state transactions for thirty years together; and I have learned, after so many years’ experience, that seriousness is the greatest wisdom, temperance the best physic, and a good conscience the best estate. And

were I to live again, I would change the whole life I have lived in the palace for an hour's enjoyment of God in the chapel." Philip, the third king of Spain, when he drew near the end of his days, expressed his deep regret for a worldly and careless life in these emphatic words,—“Ah, how happy it would have been for me, had I spent these twenty-three years I have held my kingdom in retirement!” “Good God!” exclaimed a dying nobleman, “how have I employed myself! In what delirium has my life been passed! What have I been doing while the sun in its race and the stars in their courses have lent their beams, perhaps, only to light me to perdition! I have pursued shadows, and entertained myself with dreams. I have been treasuring up dust, and sporting myself with the wind. I might have grazed with the beasts of the field, or sung with the winged inhabitants of the woods, to much better purpose than any for which I have lived.”

Examples of this kind might be multiplied to almost any extent, but enough have been cited to show how men regard the riches and honors of the world when they find themselves drawing near to a dying hour, and are called to look into eternity.

3. When men are laid upon a dying bed, they are wont to feel and to acknowledge the utter insufficiency of a mere moral life to prepare them to appear in the presence of God. Many there are who trust to such a life as their only ground of hope for eternity. They do not, perhaps, believe in the reality of a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit, or at least they do not feel the need of such a change in themselves. They mean to lead a correct moral life, to be honest in their dealings, and kind in their treatment of their fellow-men, and this, they imagine, will avail to secure the approbation of their final Judge. They have no just sense of sin, nor of their need of pardon through the blood of Christ, but trust all to a moral life. There is no more common delusion than this, and it is a delusion which vanishes at the approach of death, and leaves the soul trembling in prospect of going to appear before God. The actions of life then appear in a far different light from what they do in the days of health and thoughtlessness. Many things which are indulged, without the slightest apprehension of their being wrong, are then seen to be sins deeply offensive to God, and dangerous to the soul. The law is seen to be unspeakably more strict and holy, sin to be a much greater evil, and the trial before the judgment seat of Christ far more dreadful. What the sinner needs in the dying hour, is something to take away the sting of death; something to sustain his spirit as he passes into the dark valley, and to assure him of the forgiveness and favor of that Almighty Being before whom he is

about to appear. But this the fairest morality is utterly insufficient to do. It meets not the exigencies of the sinner's case. It is neither obedience to the law, nor to the gospel, neither love to God, nor faith in Christ. It is in its loveliest form only the cobweb covering of a fair exterior, and, wrapped only in this covering, the soul shudders at the thought of death, and falls back in dismay at the sight of the great tribunal.

The Apostle enjoyed great peace in the near prospect of death; but it was derived not from a moral life, but from faith in Christ, from evidence felt within that he had a personal interest in the great salvation, and was clothed in His righteousness who had loved him and given himself to die for him. This is the only sure ground of peace in the hour of death. Every other is then found to be insufficient, and, trusted in, ends in destruction. It is not giving up my breath, said the nobleman before referred to, it is not being for ever insensible, that is the thought at which I shrink; it is the terrible hereafter, the something beyond the grave, at which I recoil. Those great realities which in the hours of mirth and vanity I have treated as phantoms, as the idle dreams of superstitious beings, these start forth and dare me now in their most terrible demonstrations. O, my friends, exclaimed the pious Janeway, we little think what Christ is worth on a death-bed. I would not now for a world, nay, for millions of worlds, be without Christ and pardon. God might justly condemn me, said Richard Baxter, for the best deeds I ever did, and all my hopes are from the free mercy of God in Christ.

Said the meek and learned Hooker, as he approached his end, Though I have by his grace loved God in my youth and feared him in my age, and labored to have a conscience void of offence to him and to all men, yet, if thou, O Lord, be extreme to mark what I have done amiss, who can abide it? And, therefore, where I have failed show mercy to me, for I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness, for His merits who died to purchase pardon for penitent sinners. Such too were the feelings of our own venerated Hooker\* in his dying hour. To a friend who said to him, Sir, you are going to receive the reward of your labors, he replied—Brother, I am going to receive mercy. And not to mention other examples under this head, let me refer to the case of Dr. Johnson. He was a moral man; but his morality could not soften the terrors of a death-bed, nor give him the least peace in prospect of meeting his Judge. When a friend, to calm his agitated mind, referred him to his correct morals and useful life for topics of consolation, he put them away as nothing worth, and in bitterness

\* First pastor of the First Church in Hartford,—died 1647.



of soul exclaimed, Shall I, who have been a teacher of others, be myself cast away? This great man had not then fled for refuge to the blood of atonement, as he afterward did; and therefore, notwithstanding his moral and useful life, he was afraid to die, and all beyond the grave looked dark and gloomy to him. And so must it look to all who come to the dying hour with no better preparation than is furnished in a moral life.

4. Men, at the hour of death, are constrained to acknowledge the folly and guilt of an irreligious life, and the supreme importance of a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever apologies are made in the days of health and prosperity for the neglect of religion, those apologies are found utterly worthless on a death-bed, and are renounced as vain and delusive. All excuses vanish in the presence of the king of terrors, and the sinner looks back with self-reproach and astonishment upon the presumption and folly which led him to disregard God, and neglect the concerns of his eternity. Religion is then felt to be indeed the one thing needful, and the whole earth too poor to be given in exchange for the soul. I have attended many death-beds in the course of my ministry, but I recollect no instance where reason was in exercise, in which this acknowledgment was not ready to be made. All are then ready to exclaim,—O that I had been wise, that I had understood and considered my latter end. And even Christians, as much as they love and prize religion in life, feel, when they come to die, that their highest and best views of its importance were far below the reality. They see, then, that it is the only true wisdom to live for God and eternity, and they are amazed to think that they have lived at so poor a rate, and have done so little for the honor of Christ and the advancement of his cause on earth. However men may differ respecting the value and importance of religion in health, there is but one opinion on the subject when they come to lie upon the bed of death. The great question which then absorbs all others, and presses with overwhelming weight on the soul, is: Have I a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have I been born of the Spirit? Am I pardoned through the blood of atonement, and prepared to appear before my Judge in peace? The world, with all its pomp, pleasures, and interests, then appears infinitely too light to engage a single thought in comparison with the great question,—Am I a Christian, and may I hope on good ground to enter into the joy of my Lord on leaving this earthly abode? None find peace and hope in that hour, but those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel. The world retires then, and leaves its wretched votaries in poverty and despair. But heaven comes near to sustain and comfort the faithful servants of God; and they feel that an in-

terest in Christ is of more value than a thousand worlds like this. Look at Enoch walking with God, and through faith was exempted from death, and was not for God took him : at David comforting himself in the close of life in the assurance that God had made an everlasting covenant with him, ordered in all things and sure : at Paul joyfully declaring in the near view of death, " I know in whom I have believed : " at the dying missionary, Ziegenbalger exclaiming, " Washed from my sins in the blood of Christ, and clothed with his righteousness, I shall enter into his eternal kingdom : " at Swartz sweetly singing his soul away to everlasting bliss : at Baxter, saying, amid the sinkings of nature, " I am almost well : " at Owen, lifting up his eyes and his hands as in a kind of rapture, and exclaiming to a friend, " O, brother, the long looked-for day is come at last, in which I shall see the glory of Christ in another manner than I have ever yet done : " at Edwards, comforting his family, as they stood around his dying bed, with the memorable words, " Trust in God, and you have nothing to fear : " at Martyn, in the solitudes of Persia, writing thus a few days before his death, " I sat alone, and thought with sweet comfort and peace of God, in solitude my company, my friend, and comforter : " at Dwight, exclaiming, when the seventeenth chapter of John was read to him, " O, what triumphant truths : " at Evarts, shouting " Glory ! Jesus reigns ! " as he closed his eyes on death : at Payson, uttering the language of assurance, as he grappled with the last enemy, " The battle is fought ! the battle is fought ! and the victory is won forever ! " In a word, look at the great cloud of witnesses, who, in the faith of Jesus, have triumphed over death and the grave, and peacefully closed their eyes on this world in joyful hope of opening them in another and a better, and you will learn in what estimation religion is held, when the scenes of earth are retiring, and those of eternity are opening upon the vision of dying men.

When men are laid upon the bed of death and know that they must go hence to be seen here no more, they always feel that it is indeed a solemn thing to die and pass into eternity. If there be exceptions, they are very rare, and occur only in cases of extreme skepticism, or of profound stupidity. Hume could amuse himself with playing chess when death was at the door ; and Rousseau could lightly talk of giving back to God his soul as pure as when it came from his hand. But conduct like this is the extreme of infatuation, and can be regarded in no other light than as a part of the accursedness of those who are reprobate of God. Think of it as we may, while the event is viewed as future and distant, we shall all find, when the last hour comes, that it is indeed a serious matter to die. To close all our connection with this world ; to lie down upon



the bed from which we shall never rise up; to have our bodies turned to dust, and our souls go into the world of spirits to appear before God, and pass the all-decisive trial, and enter upon a state of being that is never to change,—these are events which may well make mortals tremble and shrink back at their approach. So the dying nobleman felt, whom I have more than once referred to, when he said,—a condemned wretch may, with as good a grace, go dancing to his execution, as the greatest part of mankind go on with such a thoughtless gayety to their graves. A future state, said the Duke of Buckingham, dying in despair, may well strike terror into a man who has not acted well in life; and he must have an uncommon share of courage indeed who does not shrink at the presence of God. And even Lord Chesterfield, skeptic and devotee of pleasure as he was, was compelled to acknowledge, as the closing scene drew on,—When one does see death near, let the best or the worst people say what they please, it is a serious consideration. Remorse for the past, exclaimed the dying Altamont, throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future strikes them back on the past. I turn and turn, and find no ray. Death is knocking at my doors; in a few hours more I shall draw my last gasp; and then the judgment, the tremendous judgment! How shall I appear, all unprepared as I am, before the all-knowing and omnipotent God? O eternity, eternity, cried the distracted Newport, as he lay upon his death-bed, contemplating the solemn scenes before him, who can paraphrase on the words for ever and ever?

Such are the confessions that are wont to be made by dying men; such the feelings and thoughts that crowd upon the mind as the last hour approaches. And in view of them we may remark,—

1. They are founded in truth; there is just cause for them. It is *true* that life is short, and that time is of infinite value. It is *true* that this world contains nothing which can satisfy the wants of the immortal mind. It is *true* that a moral life is utterly insufficient as a preparation for death and the judgment. It is *true* that an irreligious life is a life of extreme folly and presumption, and that a saving interest in Christ is a matter of supreme importance to every living man. It is *true* that it is a solemn thing to die and go into eternity, to appear before a holy God. And the wonder is, not that dying men should feel these things to be true, and be deeply affected by them, but that living men should treat them with indifference, and go through the world contradicting the feelings and views which are sure to crowd upon them with overwhelming interest in the day of death. Here is just matter of astonishment; and of all the strange things that are witnessed in the conduct of our fall-

en race, this is the strangest, that men should walk in the midst of graves, convey their own friends and acquaintances to the house of silence, and meet every day and in every path of life with the most solemn monitions of their own approaching end, and still live as though they were never to die, and shut their eyes on scenes which must soon burst upon them in all the weight and solemnity of a present eternity. I remark,—

2. That many of my hearers will, in a short time, view this subject in a very different light from that in which they now contemplate it. Some of you are young, and in the buoyant feelings of youth and health scarcely think it possible that you may soon be called to death and the judgment. Some of you are profoundly careless of your immortal well-being, and are so enamored of the things of the world that you seldom think of your latter end, or of what you need to prepare you to die. Others of you are perhaps skeptical as to the reality of a change of heart to fit you for the closing scene, and are trusting to a moral life as a foundation of hope in the coming day of trial; others of you still, who bear the Christian name, are probably deceived as to the ground of your hope, or are living in a state of backsliding from God, awfully unprepared for his summons to leave the world. To all such the Son of Man is likely to come in an hour they think not of; and when he comes, they will be thrown into fearful consternation, and the dreams with which they are now deluded will vanish forever. You have heard what is the testimony of dying men on some points of infinite moment to yourselves, but which you at present regard with little feeling, and treat with great neglect. But the time is not distant when you shall join your testimony with those that have gone before you into the invisible world; when the scene of life shall close, and your eternal state commence. And whatever be your present views and feelings, it is not in the least doubtful what they will be then. Should you die in the exercise of your reason, you will look back with amazement on your present course of life, and wonder how you could be so infatuated as to neglect God and your souls, and make no preparation for the solemn scenes of a dying hour. Those of you who are now young will then learn that you are not too young to die; and those of you who are living securely in sin, that it is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; and those of you who are trusting to a moral life, that you are trusting to a foundation of sand; and those of you who are cold and formal in religion, that in such a state of mind you are sadly unprepared to die, and render up your account unto God. Death will bring your hearts and lives to a new and severe test, and draw from all of you the confession, that to fear God and keep his commandments is the first duty and the highest wisdom and happiness of every living man. I remark,—

3. It is the part of true wisdom to cherish those views and feelings now, which we know we shall regard as of supreme importance when we come to die. Why should any spend life in treasuring materials for sorrow, disappointment, and despair in the dying hour? Why should any gather food for the worm that never dies, or fuel for the fire that is never quenched? If, as we draw near to death, we shall regard life as very short, and time as infinitely valuable, let us regard them so now, and be quickened to do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do. If we shall then feel that this world is a poor thing, considered as a portion for the soul, let us view it in that light now, and choose God as our portion, and heaven as our home. If a hope of acceptance with God, built on a mere moral life, will then perish as the spider's web and leave us in despair, let us renounce that vain confidence now, and build our hope on that sure corner-stone which God has laid in Zion, and which will never disappoint us. If an impenitent, irreligious life will then appear to us the greatest folly, and a saving interest in Christ the one thing needful, let us not pursue such a life any longer, but close at once with the Saviour, and follow him as our Lord and Master unto the end of our days. And if when the end comes we shall find it indeed a solemn thing to die and go into eternity to appear before God, let us regard it so now, and make that preparation which will sustain us in the last conflict, and give us peace in the day of final decision.

Look forward, then, immortal man, and endeavor to realize what will be your feelings and views in the dying hour, and if you would be wise, begin without delay to cherish those sentiments and pursue that course of life which you will then wish you had; which will save you from remorse and self-reproach and bitter despair in the great day of the Lord.

"Nothing," surely, "is worth a thought beneath, but how we may escape that death that never, never dies; how make our own election sure, and when we fail on earth, secure a mansion in the skies."

4. The confessions of dying men are of no avail, only as they indicate the folly of sin and the value of religion. They do not change the character—they do not fit the soul for death or for heaven. Of the many instances mentioned in this discourse of wicked men being awakened at the close of life to some just view of their character and state, there is not one in which there is any evidence that they repented and embraced the salvation of the Gospel. Their groans, like those of the damned, come up to proclaim the miseries of sin, and to warn the living to avoid their wretched end. It is not the remorse and fear of a dying hour; it is not the shudderings of guilt, and the confusions and tears which are wrung from sinners when they find

they can enjoy the world no longer, but must go and give an account of themselves unto God, that can avail to change the heart and prepare the soul for the inheritance of the saints in light. The strong bands of sin are not so dissolved, nor is it so that the love of God and Christ is inspired in the bosom, and meetness acquired for a place among the redeemed in heaven. No, dear hearer; if you put off religion till you come to a death-bed, you will probably be left to put it off forever. You will not find it so easy as you suppose to cast off the habits of sin, to believe in Christ, and make your peace with God. You may be awakened to see your sin and misery; you may bewail the stupidity and folly of your past life; your mis-spent time, your abuse of privileges, your neglect of calls and warnings; the terrors of death and the pains of hell may get hold upon you, and you may cry in agony of spirit for help; but God may leave you, as he has other despisers of mercy, awful monuments to warn those who survive you of the danger of trifling with the claims of religion and the high concerns of eternity. Be wise, then, in this your day, to attend to the things which belong to your peace, lest they be hid forever from your eyes. Go learn the value of religion in the peaceful and triumphant death of those that die in the Lord; go learn its value in the remorse and despair of those that die in neglect of Christ and his salvation. Then look to the end of life, and remember that with one or the other of these two classes of persons you are to terminate your mortal career; that with the friends of God, the followers of Jesus, you are to bear your testimony to the value of religion in the joy and hope that will then fill your bosom, or with the enemies of God and the neglecters of the Saviour, you are to bear your testimony to the guilt and misery of an irreligious, prayerless life, in the remorse and fear that will then agitate and corrode the soul. Which, then, will you do?—which does conscience admonish you to do?—which will you wish you had done in the day when you shall bid adieu to the scenes of earth, and go to dwell among the dead? Decide now, and let your life be regulated accordingly. Decide now, and let no day nor hour of the year on which you have just entered find you unprepared to meet the summons, should it come, that is to call you out of time into eternity. Hear the voices of those who, during the year past, departed from this congregation into the world of spirits—eleven in all, ten of whom were members of the church, and died, I trust, in good hope of eternal life. Would you die like them, and have your last end like theirs? Then, as you stand upon the threshold of this new year, with its unknown events before you, retreat awhile from the snares and delusions of the world; shut your eyes upon the scenes of time, upon which they must soon

be closed forever, and converse with the world to come—with death, judgment, and eternity. Go stand upon the shores of that dark, vast ocean you must sail so soon, and listen to the sound of its waves till you are deaf to every sound besides, and then with these solemn scenes around and before you, endeavor, with all earnestness and diligence, to gather about you those resources of faith and piety which you will assuredly need in the day when you shall be called to meet that enemy whom you must conquer, or die forever.

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## SERMON DXXXIX.

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### THE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY.

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"I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."—PHIL. 4:13.

THIS is one of those comprehensive declarations which we occasionally meet with in Scripture, and especially in the writings of Paul, in which the whole system of Christianity seems to be compressed into a single sentence. For what is Christianity but a revelation of the all-sufficiency of Christ to meet the impotence of man? Paul, with all his native and acquired intellectual energy, was, as a sinner, the heir of moral death; and even as a saint, he was the heir of an undisputed moral weakness; for we have his own testimony to the fact, that when he "would do good, evil" was "present with" him. Nevertheless, through Christ, he was mighty. In proportion as he was baptised with the Spirit of Christ, there was vigor in his thoughts, there was heroism in his heart, there was nerve in his arm, for the accomplishment of anything, for the endurance of anything to which the honor of his Master called him. And as it was with Paul, so it is with all Christ's followers. In themselves they are compassed about with many infirmities; they are often oppressed with a sense of their own weakness, and yet in Christ they have a tower of strength; they are mighty, through him, even to the pulling down of strongholds.

The inward exercises of the Christian, not less than the doctrines which he believes, bear, in no inconsiderable degree, even to himself, a mysterious character. The proposition contained in our text every Christian knows to be true as a matter of experience, and up to a certain point he comprehends it, and is

able to explain it; but beyond that point it is enveloped in deep mystery. The life of the Christian is a hidden life; and we cannot say but that the mysteries which are bound up in it may engage his admiring scrutiny through eternity. Still there is much connected with it that is capable of being explained; and, if I mistake not, an attentive consideration of the passage which I have just read to you, will bring before us the substance of all that has been revealed on this wonderful subject. "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

*The Christian's strength—the source from which, and the medium through which, it is communicated*—this will form the subject of our discourse.

I. *The Christian's strength.*—Paul expresses it in the phrase, "I can do all things." The expression is limited by the subject to which it relates; for to understand it literally, would be nothing less than to impute to the Apostle the impiety of claiming one of the Divine attributes. He is speaking of the peculiar difficulties and trials to which he was subjected in the cause of Christ, and his meaning is that he is able to meet them successfully, victoriously: he is adequate to anything to which his duty, as a follower and an ambassador of Christ, might call him. And in its application to Christians in general, it is to be understood as implying their ability to obey Christ's commands in all things; their resolution not to yield to any obstacle which they may find in their path, provided they are sure it is the path which the Master has marked out for them.

1. More particularly, I remark that the Christian is mighty to labor. It is at once the sin and the shame of a large part of the world, that they fritter away their lives in indolent inaction; and of a still larger part of it, that, though they exercise their faculties vigorously, it is for mere worldly objects. They labor hard enough for the meat that perisheth, but not at all for that which endureth to everlasting life. But the true Christian differs widely from both these classes;—from the former, as he is awake to earnest and diligent effort; from the latter, as his efforts are directed to beneficent and spiritual ends. Let him occupy whatever part of the great field he may, he will find enough to do, and if he have the Christian spirit, he will be in earnest to do it. See how inventive he is in devising plans for sustaining the great interests of truth and piety; for sending abroad the glorious Gospel; for bringing all within his reach under the benign influence of a pure Christianity! See how ready he is to keep on laboring in spite of difficulties; how he takes advantage of everything that can, in any way, be rendered tributary to his work; how he even sometimes presses into his cause the most adverse circumstances, causing that to



become the minister of good which was designed to be the minister of evil. I think I hear some one ask, "Where are we to look for such Christians as these?"—and I know it is a cutting question; I know what multitudes there are who bear the Christian name, who have no better character than that of drones in the church; and I know, too, how wretchedly most of us fall short of our Christian vows and obligations; but I also know that there are Christians, and not a few, to whom we may point triumphantly for an illustration of our position; men and women, whose desire to live in the world is identified with their desire to labor for Christ. A nobler example there never was, than the man from whom came the declaration in our text. Every faculty of his great mind was kept in intense exercise; his ruling passion was to honor Christ as a follower, in proportion as he had dishonored him as a persecutor. In the act of his conversion, he breathed forth the prayer, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and the whole record of his subsequent life shows the sincerity of that prayer; for it shows him always engaged about his Master's business. Do you say that the world has never seen but one Paul; that his conversion was an extraordinary conversion, and his character an extraordinary character, and that therefore he is not to be taken as a sample of what Christianity, acting by its more ordinary influences, can accomplish? Look, then, at Brainard, with his heart beating so high for the salvation of the poor Indians, that neither the persuasion of his friends, nor his own manifest approach to the grave, could keep him out of the wilderness; labor he would, labor he did, till his physical energies were so nearly gone, that he felt that nothing remained for him but to go away and die. Look at Henry Martyn, nothing wearied by the keen and sagacious opposition of his enemies; nothing discouraged by finding barrenness where he had hoped for a harvest; nothing intimidated by the progress of a disease which was gradually wearing out his constitution, he kept on laboring to the extent of his ability, till death took him away to occupy a more glorious field. Do you say that even these are extraordinary cases, and that I am still lingering among the greatest names that adorn the Christian record? Then let me ask you to look at the lives of most of our modern missionaries: notice the self-denial and heroic spirit that breathes in their communications; see how evident it is that they do not count even their lives dear to them; see them adventuring upon great and hazardous enterprises, evincing an intrepidity that no obstacle is powerful enough to overcome; and finally see them holding on in their course of diligent and earnest effort, till they go to render up their account with joy. Nay, you need not look across the ocean to find these glorious examples—you may find persons, I doubt

not, of both sexes, in your own community, who have learned the secret of not living to themselves; who, without neglecting their worldly business, find no little time to give to the spiritual interests of their fellow-creatures; and some who make it a part of the economy of their life to go around at regular intervals among the habitations of wretchedness, as ministers of peace and consolation. No, brethren, notwithstanding the general apathy that prevails in the church, and the multitude of cases in which its members openly and flagrantly dishonor a Christian profession, I have no fear of not being able to illustrate my position, if I should be called to do it, by living examples. There are in the bosom of the church now, even now, when the love of many waxes cold, some at least who are not weary in well-doing.

2. The Christian is mighty to *resist*. The spiritual life, so long as the natural life lasts, is an uninterrupted scene of conflict. The Christian would fain be at peace; but his enemies will not let him alone. He may be in the world engaged in his lawful business; he may be at home in the bosom of domestic quiet and comfort; he may be in the church a devout and earnest worshipper; he may be in the closet, where no eye sees him but that of his Father in Heaven; and yet in any or all of these conditions he is accessible by his spiritual foes. The world is one of these foes, in every attractive form into which it can throw itself: the prince of the power of the air is another; and he associates with himself we know not how many kindred agents: and last, though not least, that set of enemies which he harbors in his own bosom, his own inward corruptions, sometimes act upon his comfort with most terrible effect. But be his enemies what they may, and be they where they may, the true Christian, with his armor on, dares to encounter them. With the sword of the Spirit, with the breastplate of righteousness, with the guide of truth, with the helmet of salvation, he enters the conflict with confidence, and he retires from it with triumph. I do not say that he always triumphs; but it is his own fault if he does not; and in general the life of the true Christian is made up, in a great measure, of a succession of victorious conflicts.

3. The Christian is mighty to *endure*. What else is the whole record of Christian martyrdom, but a record of glorious triumphs in connection with the dying agony? See that man dressed for a conflict with the fire. The terrible arrangement for the last scene is now fully made. The stake to which he is to be bound, the faggots which are to take hold of his flesh, and the fire which is to set them at their work, are all in his view. And now he is asked for the last time, whether he is willing to abjure Christ; and he answers, as if he spoke from the depths

of a lion's heart, "No," and that "No," is gratefully responded to by a voice from the crowd, the voice of one who stands ready to die with him, the voice of his own beloved wife, bidding him be courageous, and play the man in his martyrdom. And there he stands, calmly, triumphantly, perhaps even praising God in the fire; and there *she* stands, with her eyes lifted to Heaven, and suffused with tears of thankfulness, that her husband is enabled to die so glorious a death.

And this is only a specimen of a multitude of cases that show what strength there is in the heart of a martyr. But we need not go to the history of martyrs to illustrate our position: in the more ordinary scenes of suffering we are often surprised by an exhibition of fortitude that would seem adequate to the endurance of anything. I have seen the naturally timid female, so courageous in the passage through the dark valley, that I have said to myself: "There is a spirit of noble daring there that death in any form is too feeble to vanquish; that heart would keep on beating courageously even amidst the tortures of the rack." I have seen a mother dying with a cluster of little children at her bedside; and their father was there too in the wretchedness of a vagabond and a sot; and her eyes had not seen the light for many years before the darkness of death came over her; and yet her dying hour was like an hour of jubilee; she lay upon that bed of straw, and clasped her withered hands, and moved her sightless eyeballs, and the last expressions that escaped her lips were expressions of thankfulness, of triumph, of transport. You must keep away from such scenes as these if you would doubt the Christian's power to endure; but scenes at least similar to these in their general character are occurring everywhere; and each of them is a witness to the truth which I am endeavoring to present to you.

II. Thus much may suffice to illustrate the Christian's strength; we will now, secondly, contemplate the *source* from which, and the *medium* through which, it is communicated. The apostle, in our text, refers it immediately to Christ—"I can do all things through *Christ*, which strengtheneth me."

Christ is here, no doubt, to be contemplated in the character of mediator. In this character he has all power in heaven and on earth committed to him. Hereby he is qualified to be the head of the church, and to guard all its interests, to manage all its concerns, to supply all its wants. Hereby especially he becomes, not only to the church at large, but to every individual member, the fountain of all strength. It is through the working of his mighty power that each becomes a subject of his kingdom on earth, and ultimately reaches such a spiritual stature as to be admitted to his kingdom in heaven. The administering of strength to the saints, then, belongs peculiarly

to the Saviour: it is part of the reward which crowns his mediatorial sufferings. I remark, then,

1. In the first place, that Christianity, by which I here mean the system of truth revealed in the Gospel, appeals to our sense of obligation by the authority which it claims. If an individual should require any service at your hands, which you knew he had no authority to require, you would of course deny his right, and would feel no obligation to yield to the requirement; but if the command, besides being reasonable in itself, should come to you clothed with a legitimate authority; if, for instance, it should be a command from a parent to a child, or from a magistrate to a subject, you could not fail to recognize the obligation to obey; and while this sense of obligation would embarrass you in the purpose to disobey, the spirit of obedience would as certainly find in it an important auxiliary. Let a man feel that what he is about to do is right, that it is in full accordance with his inmost convictions of duty, and it will nerve him with a resolution and energy which he could scarcely look for under other influences. Now remember that Christianity claims a Divine authority—all that *it* commands, *God* commands—the God who is our Creator and Preserver and sovereign Proprietor, and whom therefore we are bound to obey by the strongest possible obligations. In doing what he requires of us, we know, beyond a peradventure, that we are acting right; that we are acting in accordance with the dignity of our nature; acting in a manner that will abide the strictest inward test, either now or in any future period of our existence. And who needs be told that in the consciousness of being governed by such high motives, must be bound up the elements of mighty power? What made Daniel so fearless to encounter the lions' den? What made the three young men so fearless of being cast into the furnace? What made the martyrs so fearless when they sung upon the rack? What makes many a man at this day so undaunted, so persevering, in following the Master through evil report? Ah, the secret of it all is, the inward consciousness that they are doing right; the voice from within, witnessing for them that that dark path, as the case may be, that bloody path, is the path of God's commandments.

2. Christianity appeals to our fears by the terrors which it announces. Fear is one of the most active of all the passions; it was designed by the Creator to put us on our guard against evil; and no small part of our safety in the present world depends upon its operation. Of the powerful influence which this passion exerts, there are practical illustrations passing before our eyes every day. Yonder is an individual who is afraid of losing his property. See how intensely and continually it keeps his faculties in operation; how readily he deprives

himself of rest, and even of food, in order to neutralize the influences which are at work to render him a poor man. Yonder is another who is in danger of losing his good name : notice the watchfulness, the earnestness, the deep anxiety with which he labors to defend himself against either the just or the unjust imputations that are made upon him. Yonder is another who has committed some desperate deed, for which he knows that he is liable to extreme punishment : how the fear of being brought to justice tortures him by day and by night—how it keeps him upon the alert to observe everything that would seem to indicate the probability of detection—how it reconciles him to making his bed in the bosom of the forest, and carries him through the darkness of the night, as if on the wings of the wind, into far distant regions! And if fear operates so powerfully in respect to these lesser evils, what must be its operation in respect to those greater evils, which the Bible assures us are to constitute the final portion of the ungodly? All these evils are concentrated in one—the loss of the soul : but what untold misery, what depths of anguish and wailing, the loss of the soul involves, it must be left to the ages of eternity to reveal. But you will say, perhaps, that this consideration can exert no influence upon the Christian, inasmuch as he, in virtue of *being* a true Christian, is beyond the reach of these tremendous evils. But is he certain that he really sustains this character? Is it not true in respect to the great mass, even of those whose religious character shines the brightest, that they never have that full assurance of hope that casts out all fear ; while not a few are habitually in doubt concerning the evidences of their discipleship? Did not even Paul himself fear lest, after all his labors and sufferings in the cause of Christ, he should prove a cast-away ; and has he not exhorted Christians to fear lest a promise being left of entering into rest, they should seem to come short of it? If then the professed followers of Christ have just reason to doubt whether theirs be the genuine Christian experience, they have the same reason to fear lest they should find tribulation and anguish awaiting them in the next world. Must not the reflection that this is even possible, stimulate them to the highest efforts of which they are capable, in order to avoid it? Whose ear does not tingle, whose heart does not tremble, at that terrible declaration, “ Who can inhabit everlasting burnings ! ”

3. Christianity appeals to our hopes by the rewards which it proposes. Is not the hope of reward the spring of a large part of the labor which men undergo in the present life? What makes that poor man so patient and steady at his daily work? It is the hope of being able to return home with bread for his wife and children. What makes that student so intensely occupied with his books ; even wasting his physical energies, and

preparing for himself a premature grave, because he *will* not relax from intellectual toil? It is the hope of acquiring large stores of knowledge, and of having a bright name in the walks of literature and science. What makes that politician so anxious, and busy, and patriotic, and complaisant to everybody, in the prospect of an election? Why it is that he hopes a good use will be made at the polls of his own name; and he thinks how gracefully he shall wear those laurels, if they can only be obtained. But all that the mere man of the world can hope for, compared with the object of the Christian's hopes, fades into insignificance. The peace, and the joy, and the triumph, which the Christian has a right to anticipate, in life and in death, were worthy to be an object of most diligent seeking; but the glory that is beyond the veil, some beams of which now and then fall upon the eye of a vigorous faith; the glorified faculties, and the glorified employments, and the glorified society, and the glorified wisdom—all, all that is included in the idea of heaven—oh! who can measure the value of such an object of pursuit as this? And yet nothing less than this is embraced by the Christian's hope. And shall the baubles of earth set the men of the world upon a course of the most laborious effort, and do you suppose that the substantial and immortal glories of heaven shall not waken up the inmost energies of the Christian's soul? Believe me, there is that in the heavenly portion that will not suffer the heart that longs for it to beat sluggishly—there must be, there will be, active and earnest effort awakened in view of it; and where no such effort is actually awakened, we need no higher evidence that the heart has never been quickened to heavenly impulses.

4. Christianity appeals to our confidence by the aids which it proffers. If an individual has projected a great enterprise that requires a vast amount of earnest thought and laborious effort, and yet he finds no one coming to his aid for the prosecution of it, but feels that he must address himself to it single-handed, depending entirely upon his own resources, he is very likely to be deterred from entering upon it at all; or, even if he does enter upon it, he will probably soon become discouraged and abandon it altogether. But if, on the other hand, he finds himself surrounded by all the necessary aids for the prosecution of his work, he sets himself to it with zeal and alacrity; and the consciousness that all the means which he requires to carry it forward are at hand, nerves his arm with unwonted vigor, and conveys not only to himself but to others a sure pledge of success. Now, how is it with the Christian? Is he called to perform a work, without the adequate means being provided for him? Let the ordinances and institutions of Christianity answer. What is going forward here at this



hour? Why you are listening to that very truth in which the power of God unto salvation resides; you are mingling your prayers and praises before the throne of mercy; you are doing that which is eminently fitted to increase your spiritual strength; and when you return to your dwellings, you will find the Bible there, which you can read and study for yourself: there, too, you may find the closet of prayer, where the gentlest whisper, or even the silent outgoings of the soul, are sure to reach the ear of mercy: there, too, I would fain hope you may find a domestic altar, from which a grateful offering ascends to Heaven, morning and evening: and when you go out into the world, you meet with others who are bound heavenward, with whom you can take sweet counsel, and who are glad to greet you as fellow-helpers unto the kingdom of God. In short, leaving out of view the special influences of God's Spirit, which are pledged to the Christian, you have all the external aids in the religious life that you could desire; and they are present with you always, so that you can use them at your pleasure. Can you contemplate these gracious assistances, Christian, without feeling strong? In the hour of temptation, in the hour of sorrow, in the hour when arduous duties press, what say you of the encouragement that you gather from looking to the closet, to the sanctuary, to the communion table, to all the means of grace, and reflecting that God has ordained them for the very purpose of insuring to you help, victory, salvation?

5. Christianity appeals to our gratitude by the beneficence which it exhibits. None but the frozen, the adamant heart can be insensible to the bestowment of great favors. Who is that that has just gone away from your door pronouncing your name gratefully and with tears? It is a poor woman, to whom you have given a piece of bread to carry home to her half-starved children. Who is that individual whom perhaps you never saw before, who is pressing up to you with the face of a stranger and the heart of a friend, and who is struggling against his own emotions as he attempts to speak to you? It is one whom your charity rescued from the deepest degradation, and surrounded with advantages for intellectual and moral culture, which, by being faithfully improved, have made him a man—a useful man—perhaps even a great man. And who is that son of Africa, upon whose face sunbeams are playing, while tears are streaming, as he falls at your feet and acts out feelings which his tongue cannot express? Why he is a man whom you have redeemed from slavery; and as you could not see him separated from his wife and children, you have redeemed them also; and he has come himself, and brought them along with him, to stand before you as the monuments of your generous interposition.

And what is there, or rather what is there not, to awaken this same principle in the heart of the true believer toward his heavenly Benefactor? Christian, *thou* wast that slave; and yet not *that* slave, but one whose bondage was infinitely more degrading and terrible. Thou wast a slave to thine evil passions; a slave to the false maxims of the world; a slave to the very prince of darkness; and yet thou wast willing to remain in slavery, although it must have its issue in an eternal death. God so loved thee that he gave his Son to redeem thee; and that redemption has involved the death of the cross; and now, instead of being a slave, thou art one of God's freemen; thou art walking at liberty even in this vale of tears; and the heavens will open soon to announce to thee that thy redemption is complete. Here, Christian, lies the grand secret of your strength. It is the love of Christ that constrains you. You look to the cross, and you say, "What do I not owe, what shall I not owe forever, to that all-gracious, all-suffering, Benefactor?" Your heart beats to loftier purposes, and your hands are strung with fresh vigor. I wonder not now at the triumph of martyrs. The love of Jesus is stronger than the consuming fire. That crucified, enthroned Saviour is the glorious object upon which their eye fastens; a sense of the blessings of his redemption overwhelms their grateful spirits, and their tongues move in rapture to his praise so long as they can move at all. Oh, they were never so strong as in the act of dying! and the reason is, that they never before had such a sense of what it was for their Redeemer to die for them.

6. And lastly: Christianity appeals to our holy emulation by the examples which it records. It results from the constitution of our nature, that examples, either good or bad, exert a prodigious influence; and no small part of what men do, or neglect to do, is in consequence of the examples with which they are brought in contact. Hence parents who look well to the interests of their children, endeavor, as far as possible, to surround them with good examples; and hence, too, our gracious Master has surrounded us, his weak and too often wayward followers, with many illustrious models of Christian character, that they may have their influence in helping us forward in our religious course. These examples show us in the most impressive manner what it is to which we are to aspire: they give us the practical embodiment of the great principles of our faith, and then they assure us that a commanding spiritual stature is attainable, inasmuch as it has already been attained. And finally, they seem to call upon us, perhaps from their daily walks of labor, perhaps from the silence of their graves, or the glory of their thrones, to rise up continually to a more vigorous tone of spiritual action. There are eminent

saints now on the earth, some no doubt within the range of your daily observation, whose example appeals to you with mighty power as often as you contemplate it. There is a yet greater multitude in heaven : there are Abraham and Moses, and Isaiah and Paul—all the prophets and all the apostles, and a multitude who have gone since their day, some from the rack and the stake—all from a world of sorrow—all in a chariot of glory. All these are your examples, Christian ; but I am not yet at the end ; for above all and over all, is the incarnate Son of God himself, part of whose errand into the world was, to set us an example, that we should walk in his steps. And can we keep these examples in our eye ; can we look around us upon the devoted on earth, or look above us to the glorified in heaven, without earnest desires and diligent efforts to become like them ? Hear what encouraging words the great apostle hath spoken—"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us ; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Now, just review the ground we have gone over, looking at the several points as they have been successively developed, and see whether it is not as clear as the light, that Christianity is the depository of an all-quickening energy. It appeals to our sense of obligation by the authority which it claims. It appeals to our fears by the terrors which it announces. It appeals to our hopes by the rewards which it proposes. It appeals to our confidence by the aids which it proffers. It appeals to our gratitude by the beneficence which it exhibits. It appeals to our holy emulation by the examples which it records. Is it to be wondered at, then, that it accomplishes such mighty results ? Does not the Christian stand acquitted of arrogance, when he exclaims with the great apostle, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me?"

How glorious is the triumph which arises out of our subject to true Christianity ! The test by which Christianity offers to be tried, is the power that dwells in it. You have seen what it can accomplish, and what it can resist, and what it can endure ; and you have seen, moreover, that it accomplishes nothing, resists nothing, endures nothing without being able to give a substantial reason for it. I will say nothing here of the various forms of Paganism, ancient and modern ; for notwithstanding they have often rendered their votaries mighty to suffer, yet it was by means that not only contradict but outrage all the dictates of sober

reason; and among ourselves, at least, there are none who will claim for *them* a divine original. But let Deism, or any other false system, be brought to this test, and see whether the genuine gospel does not cast it into utter darkness. Reigning spirits of error, we challenge you to show us what you have done, that we may thereby know what you are. Show us your long list of martyrs, who have glorified your systems with their expiring breath, and who have felt that those systems were a cordial to their souls while their bodies lay writhing upon the rack. Show us the great multitude of benefactors to the world who have been found in your ranks; especially those who have counted it a privilege to live and even to die for the spiritual interests of their fellow-men. Show us your missionaries, to whom the exile from country, and the separation from friends, and the exposure to a sickly climate, and all the perils among heathen, are accounted as nothing, in comparison with the grand object of causing the wilderness to blossom, and of bringing many sons unto glory. Show us these fruits of your systems, these monuments of their inherent power; bring forth your men of moral might, your noble army of martyrs, or else acknowledge that you are leaning upon a prop that is nothing better than air. Or rather take refuge in the sanctuary of a pure Christianity; and become yourselves not only the depositories but the channels of divine strength; for then you shall get rid of this degrading weakness, and through Christ shall be able to do all things.

I thank the great Apostle for having penned, and the greater Saviour for having dictated, that noble declaration, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" for here is the point at which all the light, and strength, and triumph of the church are centred. When I feel oppressed with a sense of weakness, hither I can come and feel strong. When I am growing timid in the prospect of danger, hither I can come and feel courageous. When I see the waves of adversity, mountain high, fiercely approaching me, let me station myself beneath the cross, and be as quiet as a child. And there too let me stand, and gird myself for a conflict with the last enemy: if the spirit of the cross may but come over me, to death's terrors I will oppose a serene and triumphant smile. Oh, brethren, the cross is but another word for Christianity itself: by its healing, strengthening virtues, may we all be nurtured for immortality!